Editorial Coverage of Kashmir Conflict in Pakistani Media

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Abstract

The study aims at analyzing the editorial coverage of Pakistani newspapers on the issue of Kashmir. For this purpose, four mainstream national newspapers – two each of English and Urdu language - were selected and their editorial contents were analyzed. Theoretical approaches of Framing (Goffman, 1974) and Peace journalism (Galtung, 2003) were employed for their content examination. The findings of the study revealed that Urdu language newspapers comparatively gave larger space to the Kashmir conflict. All newspapers had similar framing pattern and visible inclination towards the war-oriented journalism. However, the editorial contents of Urdu newspapers carried higher degree of war-journalism indicators as compared to their English language contemporaries.

Introduction

Media and conflict situations: Mass media is largely deemed to have a considerable potential to influence public opinion[1] and shape reality. [2] Considering the notion, greater responsibility lies on media in providing information to general public for their awareness on various issues. In case of reporting the conflicts, this responsibility becomes much bigger. The public relies on media to get information and to also have understanding about a particular situation or a conflict unfolding in a distant land. Consequently, media turns out to be a dominant factor in shaping public perception about the conflict. This dominance of media is established all over the world and has increased immensely with the emergence of new media. [3]

It is assumed that media can play a role either way, to boost or diffuse, the conflict situation.[4] It means that it can have a constructive (i.e. towards peace keeping and peace-making) impact or destructive (i.e. towards confrontation and fighting) one.In the same context, Sreedharan (2009) argues that news contents, inclined to report violence and hold the other side responsible for strife, are

likely to escalate the conflict situation.[5] Conversely, the news contents seeking need and possibilities for peace could contribute to diffuse the tension and give way to political environment suited for peaceful negotiations.

Galtung's[6] (1985) approach of peace journalism is regarded significant with the purpose of analyzing the role of media during conflict and judging its orientation towards peace or war-journalism. Such analysis of news contents is based on the frames and indicators found in the news item(s). Galtung opines that intentionally or unintentionally, the media coverage of conflict(s) contribute towards fueling the situation, to which, he developed the idea of peace journalism. The 'war journalism' and 'peace journalism' frameworks are two different ways of reporting the conflict and also have different purposes. Various scholars have analyzed the role of media in times of conflict(s) and found an obvious inclination towards war-journalism. Works of Lee and Maslog[7], Fawcett[8] and Ogenga[9] are amongst those studies.

Kashmir Conflict and the media of India and Pakistan: The issue of Kashmir has been a long-standing dispute between Pakistan and India, which is considered as one of the most stubborn problems of international politics since decades.[10]Pakistan has always been raising voice in favor of Kashmiri people and extending its political, diplomatic and moral support to them in accordance with its state policy. Since human rights abuses in Indian Occupied Kashmir against the innocent Kashmiri people is a routine affair,[11] the media is regarded an important actor/stakeholder to report these violations and highlight public sentiments.[12] Boss (2010) argues that the role of media is very important with reference to India-Pakistan relations and can influence the peace process. He is of the view that media has the power to deteriorate the relationship between both countries if it's reporting is based on sensationalism. Thus with reference to Pakistan-India relations, media can prove to be a 'peacemaker or peace-breaker'. [13]Regrettably, it has been found that the media of both countries portray the other country as enemy and villain, ignoring either country's own faults or weaknesses. This results in creation of an environment of hostility and animosity instead of harmony.[14]

It is also contended that discourse of mass media of both countries on Kashmir issue is based on their own policies and agendas. PILDAT (2016) reported that despite the presence of some saner elements, media of both countries tilts towards escalating tensions instead of decreasing and resolving the issue. For example, the Indian media while discussing its relations with Pakistan, always tow the line dictated by its State. Therefore, a "symbiotic" relationship exists between the State of India and its media in reporting the dialogue process with Pakistan. Indian media presents to its public the picture dictated by the official authorities.[15] Similarly, though Pakistan has a free and liberated media

[16]with each media organization following its own editorial policy, however when it comes to the coverage of Kashmir issue, the State controls the Pakistani media and its contents.[17]

It is thought that the governments of both countries use their media for projection of their respective stance on the issue of Kashmir and shaping the opinion of their public according to their own desire and inclination.[18] It has been observed that normally Pakistani media highlights and discourses the human rights violations committed by Indian military in the Kashmir. Alternatively, Indian media focuses on the killings caused by the militants.[19]

In view of the aforementioned argument, it seems meaningful to examine the media coverage of Kashmir issue. The current study is an effort towards examination as to how Pakistani print media frame the issue of Kashmir in their editorials. It has been studied whether the media inclined towards war-oriented behavior or peace-oriented behavior while reporting conflict situations. The study has been conducted within the theoretical framework of framing[20] and peace journalism.[21]

Research Questions

Q1. To what extent the editorial coverage in Pakistani newspapers was dominated by war or peace journalism frames?

Q2. Was the editorial coverage of English language newspapers different from the Urdu language newspapers?

Q3. Which of the indicators were found dominant in the editorial coverage of selected newspapers?

Methodology

In order to examine the coverage of Kashmir issue, two Urdu (i.e. Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt) and two English (i.e. Dawn and the News) language newspapers were selected and the content analysis of their editorials was conducted. A three-month time period was chosen and the editorials published during July 9 to October 9, 2016 were analyzed. It is relevant to mention that a young Kashmiri freedom fighter, BurhanWani, was assassinated on July 8, 2016 in Indian Occupied Kashmir. Afterwards, the intensification of freedom struggle was at its peak and so was its coverage in Pakistani media. Therefore, the three months following the death of Wani have been chosen for editorial examination.

All the four selected newspapers are considered to be very influential and opinion-leaders in Pakistan, especially their editorials are regarded significant in policy-making circles. It is often believed that Urdu language media takes

conservative approach in comparison with English language media, which adopts liberal line in terms of editorial policy. Considering the notion, both language newspapers were selected to examine their framing patterns. The content categories are based on Galtung's (2003) classification, from which 10 indicators of war journalism and 10 indicators of peace journalism were taken.[22] (see Table 1). Inter-coder reliability was confirmed and examined by using Holsti's (1969) formula.[23]

Table 1
Content Categories

War journalism	Peace Journalism
Visible effects: Deaths, injuries, violent activities of Indian armed forces in Kashmir valley (i.e. shooting, pallets, shelling, thrashings, arrests etc.)	Invisible effects: Emotional trauma and disturbance, losses to infrastructure, society, culture, environment
Difference-oriented: predicting war, statements against the opponent party, depiction of strains between both countries, rule-out the dialogue process, undermine the diplomatic efforts	Solution-oriented: predicting the peace and harmony, agreements on the talk, importance of cease fire, seek third party's involvement (of P-5, UNO etc.), benefits of peaceful society, areas of agreement between both countries and their people
Here and Now: focus on apparent situation or happenings in the Kashmir, seeming conditions of Kashmiris	Causes and consequences: Discourse the reason and back ground of Kashmir issue and recent unrest, focus the results and consequences of prevalent situation of Kashmir and its potential impact on Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris
Good and bad guys labeling: Portray Kashmiris as only sufferers and Indians villain, brutal and ruthless.	Avoid Good and bad guys labeling: avoid labeling of good and bad guys
Two party orientation: one party wins and one party losses,	Multi-party orientation: talk about and give voice to many parties, not to be limited to both countries or pro and anti Kahmiris
Partisan: biased and Prejudiced for one side of the conflict, have stern inclination towards certain party or stance of the Kashmir issue	Non-partisan: take the side of all involved parties of Kashmir without be partial, be moderate in terms of stance and use language or certain terms

Elite-oriented: Major focus on leaders and elites as actors and sources of information	People-oriented: Major focus on common people as actors and sources of information
Language Uses demonizing language: Use the rigid language/words/titles/descriptions like brutal, ruthless, destitute, devastated, cruel, terrorist etc.	Avoid demonizing language: avoid the rigid words and language. Particularly avoid the bad titles/descriptions etc.
Uses victimizing language: be focused on what has been done to people and use the words like destitute, devastated, defenseless, pathetic, tragic, demoralized etc.	Avoid victimizing language: Reports what has been done and could be done by people, and how they are coping
Uses emotive words: use the terms like genocide, assassination, massacre, systematic (as in systematic raping or forcing people from their homes)	Avoid emotive words: use objective and moderate words. Or reserve strongest language only for gravest situation

Findings

The results revealed that during the three months, a sum of 148editorials was published on the issue of Kashmir in selected newspapers. It was learnt that a major chunk of editorial coverage (66.8 %) was war-oriented, carrying war-frames. Less than 32 percent of the total coverage was inclined towards peace-journalism, while only 1.4 percent coverage was neutral. In newspaper-wise analysis, it was found that daily Nawa-i-Waqt published highest number of editorials, i.e. 40 percent of the total editorials. Most of its editorials carried war-frames and only 13 editorials were peace-oriented compared to 44 war-oriented items.

Amongst all newspapers, daily Dawn gave lowest editorial coverage to the issue of Kashmir and published only ~~25~~18 editorials in the period of three months. Of these editorials, more than 61 percent were war-oriented, while around 39 percent carried peace frames. Overall, it was noticed that all newspapers published more war-oriented editorials and fewer amount of peace-oriented editorials (see Table 2).

Table 2
Overall and newspaper-wise coverage of editorials

Newspapers	War-oriented	Peace-oriented	Neutral	Editorials
The News	17(68.0%)	8 (32.0%)	0 (0.0%)	25 (16.9%)
Dawn	11(61.1%)	7 (38.9%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (12.2%)

Jang	27 (58.7%)	19 (41.3%)	0 (0.0%)	46 (31.0%)
Nawa-i-Waqt	44 (74.6%)	13 (22.0%)	2 (3.4%)	59 (39.9%)
Total	99 (66.8%)	47 (31.8%)	2 (1.4%)	148 (100.0%)

In order to examine the information statistically, chi-square test was applied to data. The statistical results (chi-square= 7.460[a], df= 6, p= .280) did not show significant difference in editorial framing of selected newspapers, which means that all newspapers framed the issue in almost same manner in terms of framing (i.e. war or peace). Similar was evident from the frequency tables that all newspapers were more inclined towards war journalism than peace journalism (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.460[a]	6	.280
Likelihood Ratio	8.204	6	.224
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.024	1	.155
N of Valid Cases	148		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

The Table 3 shows comparison of editorial coverage between English and Urdu language media. In this regard, both language newspapers were observed to have published more war-oriented and fewer peace-oriented editorials. However, Urdu language was found a little more inclined towards war-journalism as compared to English language media. In the three months time-period, Urdu language media printed 69 percent war-oriented and 31 percent peace-oriented editorials. However, English language media published 65 percent war-oriented and 35 percent peace-oriented editorials.

Table 3
Editorial coverage of English and Urdu language media

Newspapers	War journalism	Peace journalism	Total
English	28 (65.1%)	15 (34.9%)	43 (100.0%)
Urdu	71 (68.9%)	32 (31.1%)	103 (100.0%)

Statistical analysis (chi-square= 1.034[a], df= 2, p= .596) showed an insignificant difference between both language media, which indicates that both language editorials carried more or less same framing preferences (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.034[a]	2	.596
Likelihood Ratio	1.585	2	.453
Linear-by-Linear Association	.506	1	.477
N of Valid Cases	148		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .58.

An in-depth analysis of the framing pattern was also conducted and it was learnt that war-journalism frames exceeded peace-journalism frames in editorial coverage of the Kashmir issue. In 148 editorials, around 530 war-oriented indicators were found as compared to 193 peace-oriented indicators. Amongst war indicators, highest number of indicators were "elite oriented" and with "visible effects of war". Subsequent to these two indicators, the "use of demonizing language" and "good and bad guys labeling" indicators were found plentiful.

On the other hand in peace journalism frames, majority indicators were found "solution-oriented" and with "causes and consequences" and more than 64 percent of the total coverage was grounded on these two indicators. Afterwards, indicators like "non-visible effects of war" and "multi-party orientation" were found evident in peace-oriented editorial pieces (see Table 4).

Table 4
Distribution of Stories by War and Peace Journalism Indicators

War journalism indicators	N	Peace journalism indicators	N
Visible effects of war	81 (15.3%)	Nonvisible effects of war	22 (11.3%)
Elite-oriented	104 (19.6%)	People-oriented	5 (2.5%)
Difference-oriented	55 (10.3%)	Solution-oriented	79 (41.0%)
Here and now	6 (1.1%)	Causes and consequences	46 (23.7%)

Good & bad guys labeling	69 (13.1%)	Avoid good & bad guy labeling	10 (5.2%)
Two party-orientated	59 (11.3%)	Multiparty-oriented	15 (7.7%)
Partisan-oriented	65 (12.2%)	Non-Partisan	6 (3.1%)
War journalism Language		Peace journalism Language	
Use of victimizing language	20 (3.8%)	Avoid victimizing language	3 (1.5%)
Use of demonizing language	50 (9.3%)	Avoid demonizing language	6 (3.5%)
Use of emotive language	21 (4.0%)	Avoid emotive language	1 (.5%)
Total	530 (100.0%)	Total	193 (100.0%)

Conclusion

The study intends to examine the editorial coverage of Pakistani newspapers on the issue of Kashmir, by employing the theoretical approaches of peace journalism and framing. The findings of the study indicated that the framing pattern of the selected newspapers was similar in a sense that all of these remained obviously inclined towards war-oriented journalism. Furthermore, in comparison between coverage of Urdu and English language newspapers, it was found that Urdu newspapers published higher number of editorial pieces on Kashmir compared to English language newspapers, however, their inclination towards war-journalism was more or less same.

It may be concluded that the editorial policy of the Pakistani media remained inclined towards war-journalism on the issue of Kashmir. The reason may be that Kashmir conflict is regarded as a leading dispute between Pakistan and India, with the latter publically considered as an enemy country. The case of media is no more different and therefore inclination towards war frames is an expected thing. Also, it is often believed that on certain issues, media has to follow the State policy and cannot remain neutral in those conflicts in which its own government is involved.[24] Thus, it seems almost impossible for Pakistani media to become peace-oriented or neutral in case of reporting the Kashmir issue, in which Pakistan is involved right from its inception.

It is quite pertinent to mention that the selected time period of study itself was a crucial phase with regard to Kashmir issue. The atrocities of Indian security forces were at its peak after the death of Kashmiri youth BurhanWani and thousands of killings were reported in national as well as international media. Also, Pakistani media gave sufficient coverage to the developing situation in Indian held Kashmir in the aftermath of killing of Wani.[25] In the concept of

objective and ethical journalism, the foremost duty of media is to report the reality with objectivity[26] and present facts without modification.[27] Considering this aim, Pakistani newspapers highlighted the situation in Kashmir in an objective manner and wrote about what was actually happening in the valley. In fact, exceeding war-oriented indicators or frames were the reflection of the true picture of the situation in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. Thus the editorial coverage given to the issue of Kashmir may be interpreted as an "objective" journalism, instead of "war-oriented" journalism.

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